

Frequently Asked Questions:

Animal Identification and Tracing

Animal identification is available now for several species and is being expanded to others. Animal tracing is currently under development by the States and the private sector.

Participation in either component is voluntary and offers you additional options for managing and protecting the health of your animals.

Animal Identification

Q. What is animal identification?

A. Animal identification is the second component of the voluntary NAIS. Whether individual or group/lot, animal identification provides producers with a uniform numbering system for identifying their animals. The individual animal identification number (AIN) is unique and stays with the animal for its lifetime. This number links the animal to its premises of origin; when combined with animal tracing, the AIN also links the animal to each premises/location that has been reported for it. If the producer chooses, animal identification methods used in NAIS can also be used for other, “non-NAIS” purposes. For example, animal identification can be a valuable tool for animal management, genetic improvement, and marketing opportunities.

Q. Am I required to participate in animal identification if I choose to register my premises?

A. No. Registering your premises does not obligate you to participate in the other components of NAIS. However, if you do choose to participate in animal identification, a premises number for your location would first be needed.

Q. Does NAIS allow for animals to be identified as a group?

A. If your animals “stay together” and are raised as one group, and travel through the production chain that way, you may want to consider group/lot identification, rather than individual identification. When animals “stay together” as a group, individual identification of each animal in the group is not necessary because it would not enhance disease response efforts.

Q. How can I purchase official animal identification number (AIN) devices?

A. In order to purchase AIN devices, you should first determine if the type of identification devices you prefer are available. To obtain AIN devices, you will need to have a premises identification number (PIN).

You can then contact an authorized AIN device manufacturer for the AIN device managers and resellers in your area. The NAIS Web site

(www.usda.gov/nais) provides a list of AIN device manufacturers. When you purchase the devices, you will provide your premises identification number (PIN). When the PIN is confirmed to be correct, the managers or resellers will ship or deliver the AIN devices to you.

Animal Tracing

Q. What is animal tracing?

A. Animal tracing is the third component of the voluntary NAIS and is under development by the States and private sector. Once complete, voluntary animal tracing will offer an additional option to improve animal management and better protect animal health. You will be able to choose an animal tracking database (owned and operated by private industry groups or States) and report certain animal movements that might pose a significant risk of disease transmission.

Q. What benefit does animal tracing provide?

A. When there is an animal disease event, the animal tracking databases provide timely, accurate records that show where your animals have been and what other animals have come into contact with them. In addition to protecting livestock, a producer who chooses to participate in the animal identification and animal tracing components of NAIS may use the same methods of iden-

tification and information reporting to support source and/or age verification programs. This offers a strategic advantage in a highly competitive market.

Animal tracing information makes it easier for producers, States, industry, and USDA to determine the scope of an animal disease event and locate affected animals. It also ensures that you receive accurate information about where a disease event is occurring and where it is headed.

Additional Information

For more information about NAIS, contact:

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